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Daily Highlights

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T U R S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- + President of Security Council welcomes plan by United States to airdrop relief supplies into Bosnia and Herzegovina, saying such operation would reach more people in danger of starvation; European Community also expresses support for such action; Secretary-General meets with President Bill Clinton to discuss that plan.
- + Discussions between Croatian Government and local Serbs on situation in Croatia to continue this week in Geneva, according to Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference; talks on Bosnian peace plan also expected to continue this week.
- + President of Security Council, following consultations with Foreign Minister of Greece and Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia, says definitive reply is expected later this week.
- + United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon lodges protest to Israeli authorities over incident in village of Yatar in which Nepalese soldier is killed and another wounded.
- + Reports of clashes last night in Kismayu between warring factions confirmed today by spokesman for United Nations Operation in Somalia.
- + Some 310,000 Cambodian refugees have returned home so far under United Nations voluntary repatriation programme; seven members of UNTAC released after two hours of detention by National Alliance of Democratic Kampuchea.

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The President of the Security Council, Ahmed Snoussi (Morocco) today said he welcomed the plan put forward by the United States to airdrop relief supplies into Bosnia and Herzegovina, saying such an operation would reach more people in danger of starvation. Speaking to correspondents at Headquarters, he also praised the willingness of certain countries, including Pakistan, to participate in the operation.

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He emphasized that the airdrop operation would be coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The United States plan to airdrop relief supplies into Bosnia was also welcomed today by the Commissioner for External Relations in the Commission of the European Communities, Hans Van den Broek.

At a press conference at Headquarters, he said the twelve European member States, while fully endorsing the Vance-Owen Plan, hoped that the new Administration of President Clinton would join in the efforts to bring the Yugoslav parties together.

Sir David Hannay, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, also expressed his Government's support for the plan to airdrop relief over Bosnia as a supplement to the major effort on the ground in which British troops have been participating.

He said he expected an announcement by the United States later today on its plans within the framework of the Security Council resolutions and in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met with United States President Bill Clinton this afternoon in Washington D.C. to discuss the American proposal to use airplanes to reach civilians in need of humanitarian assistance.

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Discussions between representatives of the Republic of Croatia and local Serb authorities on the situation in Croatia will continue this week in Geneva under the auspices of the Co-Chairmen of the Yugoslav Conference, Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance.

In a statement read out during consultations of the Security Council today, Mr. Vance, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Yugoslavia, said that some differences remained between the two sides on who should police certain areas from which Croatian forces were to withdraw. Discussions in Geneva would focus on resolving the outstanding difficulties that have so far held up conclusion of a cease-fire agreement, he said.

Mr. Vance briefed the Council on meetings he and Lord Owen, the European Community Negotiator, held last week with representatives of the two sides on a proposed cease-fire agreement, requested by the Secretary-General as condition for the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) there beyond 31 March. He reported that agreement had been reached on large parts of the plan, including a five-day deadline, after the conclusion of the agreement, for the Croatian armed forces and the police to return to positions held before the outbreak of hostilities last month. The five-day deadline also applied to the placement of all heavy weaponry under

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the supervision of UNPROFOR and its control of specified areas. Moreover, the parties would request the United Nations to strengthen UNPROFOR to carry out its functions under the Vance plan.

With regard to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Vance reported that he and Lord Owen had held a series of meetings with the United States Special Envoy, Reginald Bartholomew, and with the Special Envoy of the Russian Federation, Deputy Foreign Minister Churkin.

The Co-Chairmen had sought to continue their meetings with representatives of the Bosnian sides, "but it has not been easy to organize these meetings", Mr. Vance said. Further meetings with the three sides were expected this week, he said.

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The Security Council today held consultations on the question of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Speaking to correspondents after the Council's deliberations, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, Sir David Hannay, said Council members had been briefed on a progress report by the Council President Ahmed Snoussi, who had held consultations this morning with the Foreign Minister of Greece and the Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia. Sir Hannay said there was support in the Council for a quick solution to the problem of that former Republic of Yugoslavia and that Council members felt that the inclusion of this new country in the United Nations would be a factor for stability in the area.

Meanwhile, Council President Snoussi told correspondents that he was expecting a definite answer from the two parties either tomorrow or Thursday.

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The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has strongly protested an incident in which a Nepalese soldier was killed and another wounded Monday night when a mortar round fired by the South Lebanon Army (SLA) hit a UNIFIL position in the village of Yatar.

In a statement issued at Headquarters today, UNIFIL said it had lodged the protest to the Israeli authorities concerning the exchange of fire between the Israel Defence Forces (IDF)/the South Lebanon Army (SLA) and forces of the Islamic Resistance.

As far as UNIFIL was concerned, the statement said, there was nothing to justify the firing directly into a Nepalese position. Since the inception of UNIFIL in 1978, some 192 peacekeepers have died, 19 of them Nepalese, it said.

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Reports of clashes last night in Kismayu between the forces loyal to Mr. Mohammed Said Hersi, known as General Morgan, and Colonel Omar Jess, were confirmed today by the spokesman for the United Nations Operation in Somalia (ONUSOM). General Morgan's troops now controlled Kismayu and the Jess forces were on the outskirts of the city "apparently preparing for a counter-attack", the spokesman said.

The new Force Commander of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), Lieutenant-General Cevik Bir of Turkey, arrived in Mogadishu yesterday. He was received by Ambassador Ismat Kittani, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia. The Commander, who would remain in Mogadishu until 25 February, was briefed by personnel of UNOSOM and the United States-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF), the spokesman said.

The Ad Hoc Committee for National Reconciliation in Somalia met in Mogadishu today to prepare for the Conference on Somalia scheduled to be held on 15 March in Addis Ababa.

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Some 310,000 Cambodians have returned home as part of the United Nations voluntary repatriation programme for Cambodian refugees. The plan is a joint effort of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

According to a press release issued by the UNCHR today, the Khao-I-Dang camp would be the sixth of seven camps to be closed since the operation to repatriate nearly 370,000 refugees began in March last year.

The last camp will be shut down on 30 March before the elections, which are scheduled to be held from 23 to 25 May.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) reported today that seven members of UNTAC had been released after having been "briefly deprived of their freedom of movement" by the National Alliance of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK).

The seven people included three United Nations Military Observers -- two from the United States and one from the Russian Federation -- one Bangladesh battalion platoon leader, a medical doctor attached to the Civilian Police Component, an interpreter and the Deputy Provincial Director of Siem Reap Province.

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